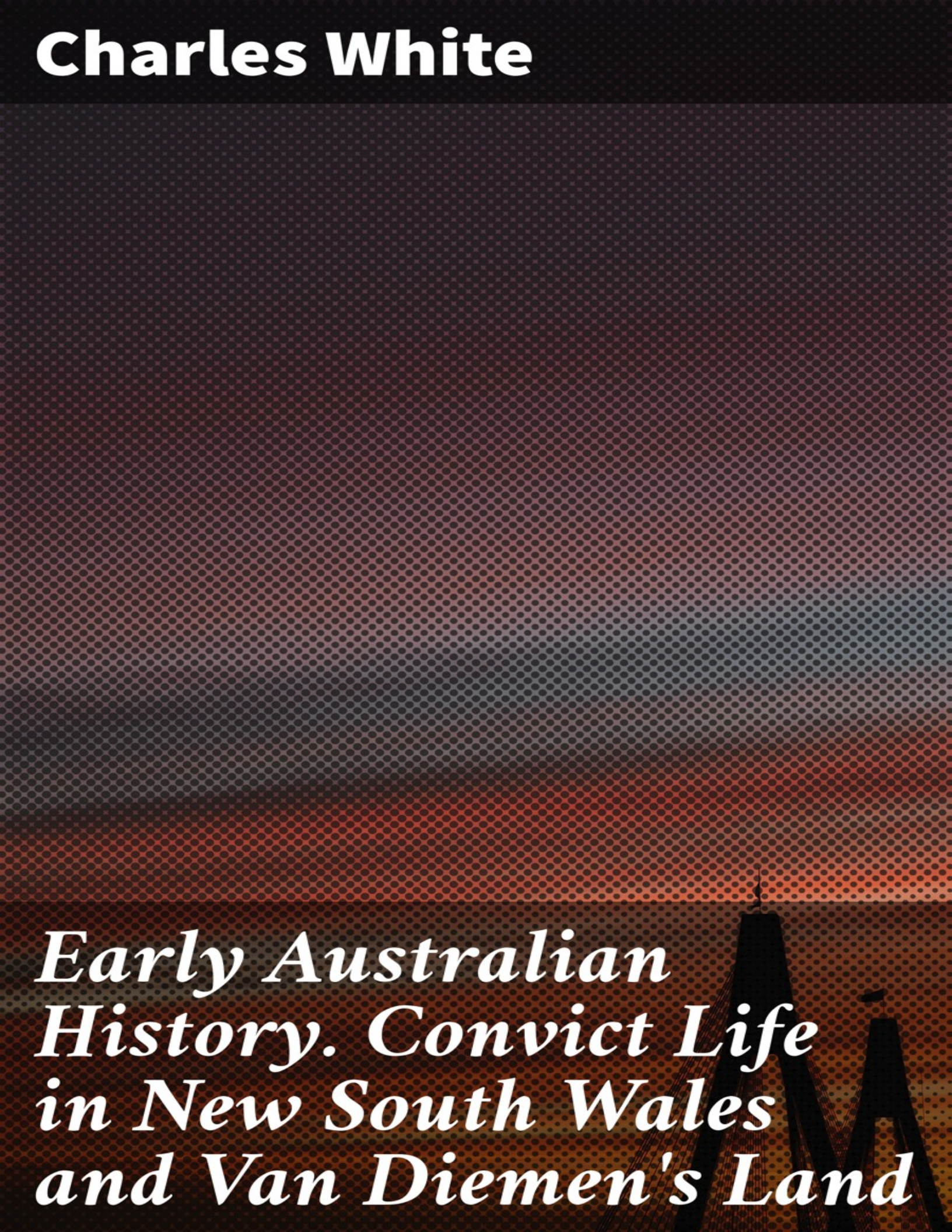


Charles White

*Early Australian
History. Convict Life
in New South Wales
and Van Diemen's Land*

The background of the cover features a halftone-style illustration of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky transitions from a dark, textured blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow glow at the horizon. In the lower right corner, the dark silhouettes of the masts and rigging of several sailing ships are visible against the bright horizon.

Charles White

Early Australian History. Convict Life in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land



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How strangely the links fit in! Little did the British Government think when issuing the orders in Council in 1786 for establishing a Convict Settlement in New South Wales, that they were taking the initial steps towards founding a "New Britannia in the Southern World." Yet so it was. If the American War of Independence had not closed the plantations of Virginia against the reception of transported offenders, and cast upon the British Government the duty of fixing upon some other place to which they might send some of the prisoners who then filled the gaols of Great Britain to overflowing, the wonderful land of which Captain Cook had spoken as having been discovered by him, and concerning which the interest of the English people had been considerably excited at the time his narratives-were published—the land which now ranks as one of the richest, most populous, and most progressive of the British dependencies—might to this day have remained in the possession of the aborigines; producing nothing, promising nothing; locked up from civilization and all its blessings (and curses), and unknown save to the few thousands of blacks who might from year to year inhabit it. And what, then, would the world have lost—what, then, should we who live in it have lost?

Pessimists, time and again, have raised a lachrymose wail about the 'stain' which must always rest on the

colony through the criminality of its early life; but these men can never see anything but the evil, and even that evil they would intensify for the sake of making their wailing more mournful. 'Tis true that the beginning was in some measure bad, but that bad beginning was better than no beginning at all; and, fresh from long and deep research among old records, I am bold to declare that the earlier convicts were not the worst criminals who came out to the colony, and that some of the darker and bloodier stains which deface the first pages of the colony's history were made by men who counted the poor chained wretches under them as worse than the offal in a charnel-house—men who came out free, who lived freely, lied and robbed and murdered freely, and who literally fattened on the blood of other mortals a thousand times better than themselves, although those mortals had been banished from their fatherland in chains. The facts in proof of this assertion will appear in proper order; at present we must deal with events that transpired before either bond or free from Britain's shores placed foot upon Australian land for the purpose of making it their home.

Great Britain had had experience of transport colonization before ever Australia was thought of. For upwards of a century and a half, historians tell us, great numbers of convicts were annually sent across the Atlantic to American plantations, most of them being sold to the planters for a term of years or for life, and from this source, for a considerable period, England is said to have derived a revenue as large at times as

£40,000 a year, the convicts being sold to the planters at an average of £20 each. But here, also, out of evil good arose. Virginia, one of England's earliest and most successful attempts at colonization, is a remarkable instance of prosperity outflowing from beginnings of the darkest moral shade. In the case of Australia, the conditions were different, but the elements were the same, and now that the old order has changed, giving place to the new, we, from the midst of the free, beneficent and flourishing institutions now existing—from surroundings of the most favorable character—from conditions of private, social and public life of which any nation might be proud—look out upon the fast-fading picture of the past, and marvel exceedingly at the change.

"Read me anything but history," said Walpole; "that is sure to be false." And a good many in Australia living at the present day would give not a little of their possessions to be able to create a general distaste for and hatred of colonial history, and to induce those who cared to read that history to believe that it was false. They fear the record because of its truth, and because they have reason to know that in this case "truth is stranger than fiction." And I purpose giving only such facts, in this somewhat irregular narrative, as can be vouched for either by living witnesses or by written (some very badly written) official records. The reader can, of course, if he choose, keep in view the maxim of Epicharmus—"Be discreet, and bethink thee to be mistrustful, to disbelieve rather than otherwise;" but

neither doubt nor distrust on the reader's part will render less true the records—some of which are written in ineffaceable letters of blood.



PART I.—THE STORY OF THE TEN GOVERNORS.

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CHAPTER I.—GOVERNOR PHILLIP— 1787 to 1792.

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FIRST SIGHT OF THE ABORIGINES—THE LANDING—REGULAR FORM OF GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED—A COMPARISON—FIRST LIVESTOCK STATISTICS—UNLIMITED GUBERNATORIAL POWERS—PROGRESS OF CULTIVATION—TROUBLESOME CONVICTS—TROUBLES WITH THE BLACKS—STARVATION TIMES—STRINGENT REGULATIONS—THE LASH AND THE GALLOWS—FIRST GRANT OF LAND—FIRST SETTLERS—FIRST FREED CONVICTS—HIGH PRICES—MORTALITY TABLES—"TRUE PATRIOTS WE"—FIRST ATTEMPT TO PIERCE THE BLUE MOUNTAINS.

IT was early in the year 1787 that a fleet of eleven sail could be seen rendezvousing off the Isle of Wight, the names of the vessels being the Sirius, frigate; the Supply, armed tender; the Golden Grove, Fishburn, and Barrowdale, storeships; and the Scarborough, Lady Penrhyn, Friendship, Charlotte, Prince of Wales, and Alexander, transports. On board were Captain Arthur Phillip, styled Governor and Commander-in-Chief of New South Wales, with other inferior officers—a Lieutenant-Governor, a chaplain, a commissary, judge advocate, surgeon, adjutant, quarter-master, two assistant surgeons and an agent for transports; a garrison of 200 marines, fully officered; 200 soldiers, forty of whom were allowed to take their wives and families; 81 other free persons and 696 convicts—making a total of 1044 persons. Of this number 1030 were safely landed in the colony in January, 1788, having been eight months on the water. Of

the number landed about 300 were females, twenty-eight being wives of the military, and 192 convicts. It must not be supposed that these male and female convicts were criminals of the deepest die, for they were mostly young persons from the agricultural districts of England, and out of the whole 696, only 55 were sentenced for longer periods than seven years, and the sentences of a large number would expire within two or three years after their landing. The laws of England a century ago, and their administration, were very different from what they are now, and large numbers of those who crowded the gaols, and were sent from the gaols across the water to the new land, had never been accused of anything worse than poaching or smuggling, while many of them were suffering for political offences which in later days made statesmen, and crowned the 'transgressors' with imperishable glory. That there were some very bad men and women in the first batch, and in the batches that followed in their wake, is true; but the number was proportionately small, and their influence for evil was necessarily contracted.

The first ship of the fleet, the Supply, with the Governor on board, anchored in Botany Bay on 18th January, 1788, and was closely followed by the other ships. Concerning the landing we find the following record in the history of Governor Phillip's voyage, published in the following year:—"At the very first landing of Governor Phillip on the shore of Botany Bay, January 18th, 1788, an interview with the natives took place. They were all armed, but on seeing the Governor approach with signs of friendship, alone and unarmed, they readily returned his confidence by laying down

their weapons. They were perfectly devoid of clothing, yet seemed fond of ornaments, putting the beads and red baize that were given them on their heads and necks, and appearing pleased to wear them. The presents offered by their new visitors were all readily accepted, nor did any kind of disagreement arise while the ships remained in Botany Bay." Well would it have been for the aborigines if Governor Phillip's spirit had animated all those who in after years, during the succeeding efforts of colonization and settlement, were brought into contact with them. Some of the facts detailed later on will prove that, in the fullest sense of the term, civilization to the blacks meant nothing more nor less than physical and moral ruin, and that in the sound of the first gun fired from a British piece on Australian soil the original occupants of that soil heard their death knell.

The story of the first landing of Governor Phillip's mixed party, and the subsequent removal of the settlement from Botany Bay to Port Jackson, whose harbour, from its sheltered position, deep water, and almost immeasurable bays and bold headlands, was seen to be the most desirable haven that anyone could wish, must be familiar to the reader; as also must be the formalities observed by the Governor on January 26th, 1788, in taking possession of the land—hoisting British colors on a flagstaff erected on the site now occupied by Dawes' Battery, drinking the King's health around the pole amid much excitement and cheering, while the blacks saw and heard from a distance the wonderful sights and sounds, little dreaming that the company of white-faced mortals upon whom they gazed

would in so short a space of time push them off the land which Nature had given them to possess.

The work of clearing a sufficient space for tents and stores on the shores of Sydney Cove occupied about a fortnight, and this done, the work of establishing a regular form of Government was carried out in a very solemn manner by the Governor. The military was drawn up under arms, the prisoners stationed apart, and the Royal Commission and the Acts of Parliament authorising the establishment of the Courts of Judicature having been read by the Judge-Advocate, a volley was fired, and his Excellency delivered an address to the convicts. He reminded them that they were now so placed that by industry and good behaviour they might soon regain the advantages which they had forfeited, and promised that every assistance should be rendered them in their efforts to reach the position which they had lost by their offences; but he told them plainly that no mercy would be shewn to offenders against the law. He advised those of the convicts who were in a position to do so to marry, holding out to them promises of assistance; and he closed his address by declaring his earnest desire to promote the well being of all who had been placed under his control, and his determination, with the help of God, to render the colonization of the new land advantageous and honorable to the colony.

Speaking of this time, Collins, one of the earliest writers on the colonization of New South Wales, says: "The confusion that ensued will not be wondered at when it is considered that every man stepped from a boat literally into

a wood. Parties of people were everywhere heard and seen variously employed; some in clearing ground for the different encampments, others in pitching tents or bringing up such stores as were more immediately wanted; and the spot which had so recently been the abode of silence and tranquility was now changed to that of noise, clamour and confusion; but after a time order gradually prevailed everywhere. As the woods were opened and the ground cleared, the various encampments were extended, and all wore the appearance of regularity." Let anyone now mix with the thousands of hurrying, bustling mortals, of every age and color and clime, who daily come and go to the water's edge where this landing took place, and as he gazes across the crowded harbour or turns back to pass through the mazes of buildings and the ever-thickening stream of people in the city of Sydney and the adjacent suburbs, the one great surprise of his life will be the marvellous change which has taken place in the short space of a hundred years.

Four months after the first landing—in May, 1788—the Governor directed every person in the Settlement to make a return of what live stock was in his possession, and this was the full record:—1 horse, 3 mares, 3 colts, 2 bulls, 5 cows, 29 sheep, 19 goats, 49 hogs, 29 pigs, 5 rabbits, 18 turkeys, 29 geese, 35 ducks, 122 fowls, and 89 chickens. And only this from which the supply of fresh meat for more than a thousand persons was to be drawn! From this small stock, in the following month, the two bulls and four of the five cows were lost through the carelessness of the man who had charge of them; although the loss eventually proved a great

and permanent gain, the stray animals being afterwards discovered—in November, 1795—on the other side of the Nepean River, a place there after called the Cowpastures, the seven having become nearly fifty. Governor Hunter, who had succeeded Phillip, in person went in search of the missing cattle and personally inspected the herd, satisfying himself that they were the descendants of the original importations by having one of them killed. These wild cattle were religiously preserved from destruction, and increasing greatly divided into mobs, each under the charge of a victorious bull, until the general increase of stock diminished their value. The surrounding small settlers consumed not a little of the wild beef, and, subsequently, when beef ceased to be a luxury, the remnants of this wild tribe, which had sprung from the original stock, were destroyed by order of the Government. It is recorded that about the time this wild herd was discovered three miserable cows of the Indian breed sold for £189, and two years afterwards two ships were employed eight months in bringing 51 cows, 3 bulls, and 90 sheep from the Cape, at enormous cost. Running along the years we find at the beginning of 1887, in the three colonies of Australia alone—New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland—the following record of live stock possessions:—

New South Wales:

.....369,663 Horses

.....1,367,844 Cattle

.....39,169,304 Sheep

.....209,576 Pigs.

Victoria:

.....308,553 Horses

.....1,303,265 Cattle

.....10,700,403 Sheep

.....240,957 Pigs.

Queensland:

.....278,694 Horses

.....4,071,563 Cattle

.....9,690,445 Sheep

.....61,861 Pigs.

TOTAL:

.....956,910 Horses

.....6,742,672 Cattle

.....59,560,152 Sheep

.....512,394 Pigs.

And this is not the only illustration that Australia has furnished of a 'little one' becoming 'a thousand.'

It was towards the close of 1792 that Governor Phillip resigned his command in the colony and returned to England; and here a word or two may be said in praise of his uprightness of character, kindness of heart, firm discipline, and administrative ability. His position was a peculiarly onerous one, his duties were most difficult, and the noble example of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice set by him on more than one occasion when actual starvation stared

the colonists—free as well as bond—in the face, has never been surpassed by any ruler in ancient or modern times. After the lapse of a hundred years one can hardly conceive the difficulties attendant upon official life in the days when Governor Phillip held absolute sway. The rough and rude material which he had to shape into order and decency would under favorable circumstances have tested the humanity and statesmanship of the kindest of mortals and the most skilful of generals; but it was under the most unfavorable conditions that Governor Phillip successfully carried the people placed under his charge through the initial stages of colonization and settlement. The convicts at times gave great trouble, and had it not been for the strictness of the discipline enforced—although no approach was made to arbitrariness, much less official cruelty—it is more than probable that felony would have proved too much for the powers of militaryism, and lawlessness would have triumphed. It is not every man who, in a similar position, would have used his powers so wisely—powers the equal of which have, perhaps, never been held or exercised by any other official in the British dominions. He could sentence to 500 lashes, fine £500; the regulation of customs and trade were in his hands; he could fix prices and wages, could sentence a man to death and execute him, or grant an absolute pardon; he could bestow grants of land, or prevent a would-be purchaser from investing in any article for use or trade. As Samuel Sidney well puts it: "All the labour of the colony was at his disposal, all the land, all the stores, all the places of honor and profit, and virtually all the justice. His subjects consisted of his subordinate officers—for, as

captain-general, the commandant of the troops was under his orders,—of the few who resorted to New South Wales to trade, whose profits were at his disposal, and the convicts, outcasts without civil rights. The distance from England, the few means of communication, the indifference of the English to the fate of the inhabitants of a penal colony, or of any colony, rendered the governor, so far as the control of law extended, actually irresponsible. As there was no law, so there was no publicity and no public opinion to restrain the despotism which was the only possible government in such a penal colony." More powerful than many Sovereigns, yet exercising that power more like a kind parent than a despotic king, what wonder that he should have succeeded in preserving order in a community and under conditions most unfavorable, and where failure would have attended the efforts of most men?

Under the unfavourable circumstances existing, it was not to be expected that during the four-and-a-half years of Governor Phillip's reign any great progress in the direction of proper settlement would be made; but there was progress, nevertheless. The work of cultivation was carried on by the Government as well as it was able on the public account, but the conditions of soil and labour were so unsuitable that the yield was not nearly sufficient at the best to provide for the wants of the inhabitants, whose numbers were ever increasing by the arrival of fresh ship-loads of convicts. On two or three occasions the colony was put in the greatest straits through the failure of the crops and the absence of provisions. During the first year nothing was produced in the colony except a few vegetables, and the stock of provisions

brought out from England was in danger of being exhausted before fresh supplies could be procured. Everyone was put upon short allowance, and disaffection among the troops and the convicts speedily manifested itself. Some of the former entered into a conspiracy for plundering the public store, and succeeded in abstracting a quantity of provisions before the plot was discovered. As a warning to others the chief conspirators, seven in number, were hanged by the Governor straight off. Starvation stared the people in the face, and, regardless of consequences, the convicts broke regulation bounds and strayed into the bush in search of herbs and roots. The result was a natural one—scores of them were murdered by the blacks, and so many were being cut down in this way that an order was given for every one found beyond certain boundaries to receive one hundred and fifty lashes. If any of the unfortunates managed to get away from the aborigines only wounded they were sent to the hospital, and flogged as soon as they recovered. In those days death was not always the worst fate that could befall a prisoner.

The early records declare that one man who was caught by the solitary clergyman in the settlement stealing potatoes from a garden, was sentenced to 300 lashes, to have his ration of flour stopped for six months, and to be chained for that period to two others who had been caught robbing the Governor's garden.

During this trying period Governor Phillip lived on the same ration as was allowed to the meanest person under his charge, the weekly provision issued to everyone being simply two and a half pounds of flour, two pounds of rice,

and two pounds of pork. The humanity of the Governor is seen in the fact narrated by Collins that he gave up 3 cwt. of flour which was his own private property, declaring that he did not wish to have on his table at such a time more than the ration that was received in common from the public stores.

When the people were on the very verge of despair and death, their eyes were gladdened by the sight of a provision ship sailing into the harbour, and bringing 127,000 lbs. of flour, being a four months' supply for the settlement. A few days afterwards four ships arrived bringing 1000 male and 250 female convicts. It can readily be imagined what would have happened had these transport ships discharged their living freight before the public larder had been replenished by the timely arrival of the vessel with provisions.

It is worthy of record that the first grant of land was made to a settler named Ruse in 1791, he having declared that he was able to support himself without aid from the Government stores on a farm which he had occupied fifteen months, the grant of land having been made as a reward for his industry. In December, 1792, there were 67 settlers holding under grant 3,470 acres, of which 470 acres were under cultivation and another hundred cleared. The bulk of this land was near Sydney, and was then, as it is now, looked at from an agriculturist's point of view, 'miserably barren;' and the little provision that was won from the soil was chiefly due to the fact that the work was done by convicts and without pay. These free settlers—most of them convicts free by servitude or pardon—were supported entirely for eighteen months by the Government, assistance

being rendered as soon as they went on the land. They were clothed, received their tools and primitive implements of husbandry, and grain for seed, from the Government stores, together with the use of as many convicts as they would undertake to clothe, feed, and employ; while huts were erected for them also at the public expense.

The Government also did a little farming on its own account, and the site of the present Botanical gardens was one of the first plots to be brought under cultivation.

Among the first settlers were some of the marines who had formed the first garrison and whose places were filled by detachments of the corps raised expressly for service in the colony, afterwards called the 102nd Regiment. Those who chose to stay had quantities of land granted to them in proportion to their rank, and several of those who availed themselves of the advantages offered became wealthy colonists in the course of a few years. The regulations under which land was granted to non-commissioned officers and privates on the expiry of their terms of service were as follows:—To every non-commissioned officer, an allotment of 130 acres of land, if single; and 150 if married. To every private 80 acres if single and 100 if married; and ten acres for each child at the time of granting the allotment—free of all taxes, quit-rents, and other acknowledgments for the term of five years; at the expiration of which term to be liable to an annual quit-rent of one shilling for every fifty acres. As a further inducement to engage in public service, a bounty was offered of £3 per man to every non-commissioned officer and private who would enlist in the new corps; and an allotment of double the above proportion

of land if they behaved well for five years, to be granted them at the expiration of that term, the allotments not to be subject to any tax for ten years. And at their discharge at either of the above periods, they were to be supplied with clothing and one year's provisions, with seed-grain, tools, and implements of agriculture. The service of a certain number of convicts was to be assigned to them for their labour when they could make it appear that they could feed and clothe them.

A list of the prices of agricultural stock and produce at the close of Governor Phillip's reign will shew how scarce were some of those things which now are almost beyond counting. Flour (ship's) was 9d per lb., potatoes 3d per lb., tea 8s to 16s per lb., sugar 1s 6d per lb., (and black at that!), porter 1s per quart, spirits 12s to 20s per gallon, sheep (the Cape breed) £10 10s each, milch goats £8 8s, breeding sows £7 7s to £10 10s, laying fowls 10s each. Of cattle and horses there were none for sale.

The rough mortality table for 1792 shews that there died two persons of the civil department, six soldiers, 418 male convicts, 18 female convicts, and 79 children. The marvel is that under such unfavourable conditions of life the mortality was not much greater. Referring to this subject Collins says:—"The weakest of the convicts were excused from all kinds of labour; but it was not hard labour that destroyed them; it was an entire want of strength in the constitution, which nothing but proper nourishment could repair. This dreadful mortality was confined to this class of people; and the wretches who were detected (stealing) were in general too weak to receive a punishment adequate to their crimes.

Their universal plea was hunger; a plea which, though it could not be contradicted, imperious necessity deprived of its due weight, and frequently compelled punishment to be inflicted when pity was the prevailing sentiment." When, however, the settlement was again placed on full rations (July, 1792), there were better filled stomachs, more contentment, and fewer deaths.

The year of Governor Phillip's departure was made remarkable also by the arrival of the first foreign trading vessel. She was from the United States, and entered Port Jackson in November, loaded with goods which the enterprising American skipper considered suitable to the new market. As it happened, the goods forming his cargo were in great demand, and he disposed of them at a high profit. In the same month one of the first warrants of emancipation was made out in favour of the notorious London pick-pocket, Barrington, to whom the credit of composing the prologue to one of the first dramatic representations attempted in the colony was given, and which contained the oft-quoted lines:

"True patriots all, for be it understood,
We left our country for our country's good."

The following is the full text of that peculiar document:—

From distant climes, o'er wide-spread seas we come,
Though not with much eclat, or beat of drum;
True patriots all, for, be it understood,
We left our country for our country's good:
No private views disgrac'd our generous zeal.

What urg'd our travels was our country's weal;
And none will doubt, but that our emigration
Has proved most useful to the British nation.
But you inquire, what could our breasts inflame.
With this new passion for theatric fame;
What in the practice of our former days,
Could shape our talent to exhibit plays?
Your patience, Sirs, some observations made.
You'll grant us equal to the scenic trade.
He, who to midnight ladders is no stranger,
You'll own will make an admirable ranger.
To seek Macheath we have not far to roam,
And sure in Filch I shall be quite at home.
Unrivalled there, none will dispute my claim,
To high pre-eminence and exalted fame.
As oft to Gadshill we have ta'en our stand,
When 'twas so dark you could not see your hand.
Some true bred Falstaff we may hope to start,
Who, when well-holster'd well will play his part,
The scene to vary, we shall try in time.
To treat you to a little pantomime.
Here light and easy columbines are found,
And well-bred harlequins with us abound;
From durance vile our precious selves to keep
We often had recourse to th' flying leap;
To a black face have sometimes ow'd escape,
And Hounslow Heath has proved the worth of crape.
But how, you ask, can we e'er hope to soar
Above these scenes, and rise to tragic lore?
Too oft, alas! we've forced th' unwilling tear,

And petrified the heart with real fear.
Macbeth a harvest of applause will reap,
For some of us, I fear, have murdered sleep;
His lady too with grace will sleep and talk,
Our females have been used at night to walk.
Sometimes, indeed, so various is our art.
An actor may improve and mend his part;
"Give me a horse," bawls Richard, like a drone,
We'll find a man would help himself to one.
Grant us the favour, put us to the test,
To gain your smiles we'll do our very best;
And, without dread of future Turnkey Lockits,
Thus, in an honest way, still pick your pockets.

It is worthy of note also that the first attempt to penetrate the Blue Mountains was made during Governor Phillip's reign. In the month of December 1789, Lieutenant Dawes and a party essayed the task, but returned to Sydney after nine days' absence without having as much as touched the cover of that sealed book which in future years was to open up to the people of all countries such a vast area of wealth-producing soil. For many years thereafter the Blue Mountains were looked upon as a curtain hiding from view a most mysterious land; but it is safe to say that no dream of wealth and beauty then crossing the mind even approached the reality which many thousands at the present day both feel and know.

Governor Phillip embarked for England on the 11th December, 1792, and settled in Bath on a pension of £500 a year, which was granted by the British Government, for his services in establishing the colony. He died at Bath in 1814.

CHAPTER II.—THE INTERREGNUM— 1792 to 1795.

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During the greater portion of the three years following Governor Phillip's departure the Government of the settlement was practically a military despotism. The Government devolved, first upon Major Francis Grose, and secondly upon Captain Patterson, senior officers of the 102nd Regiment of the New South Wales Corps, and these officers by incompetency on the one hand and wretched militaryism on the other succeeded in establishing an order of things the whole tendency of which was evil, and the results of which have extended down the whole line of the hundred years which have now passed since the foundation of the colony.

A word or two here concerning the "New South Wales Corps," of which these officers were distinguished members,

must be said. The corps had been raised in England in 1790-1 for service in the colonies—a service which was not considered at that time either dignified or honourable for any British officer of much repute to engage in; and consequently many of those who found their way into it possessed a very low estimate of morality and honesty. They were, therefore, quite prepared to engage in any work, however dirty, or unjust, or arbitrary, that would bring pecuniary profit to themselves or satisfy the gross sensuality of their natures. And they found in the convict settlement a splendid field for the exercise of their evil inclinations.

The first use Grose made of his power was to issue an order merging the civil in the military authority. From this time forth the officers of the Corps held the reins of power, and they were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunities thus offered for self-aggrandisement; and so firmly did they batten themselves on the life of the colony—social, civil, and political—that for nearly a quarter of a century after the issue of Grose's first order they literally wielded the helm of State, against Governors and people alike.

Their first division of the 'spoils' consisted in land appropriation. Although Governor Phillip had only alienated about 3,000 acres of the public land to private individuals, these military robbers appropriated more than 15,000 acres to themselves within a very short time, their own immediate friends coming in for a share of the plunder. And for long after their messmates had vacated the gubernatorial seat this small but powerful class continued to 'grab' the public

estate with greedy fingers, and those of them who were steady as well as unscrupulous thus became the founders of wealthy families who, even at that early day, and with the dirt still clinging to their fingers, assumed the powers and privileges of a 'landed aristocracy.' The leader of the class which assumed such privileges was Mr. John Macarthur, who was captain and paymaster of the Corps, but who after a few years service left the ranks of *honour* and developed into a large landed proprietor and owner of stock; subsequently becoming so powerful as to disturb even the seat of Government, and plunge the whole colony into confusion. The one redeeming feature in his career was the successful attempt he made to improve the breed of sheep; but it is questionable whether, even in this act, he had any higher patriotic motive than that furnished by the possibly louder jingle of coin in his own pocket. It is but just to say, however, that he set a virtuous example in private and social life which put the conduct of many of his fellow-officers to the blush, his family being one of the best-regulated in the colony.

The position occupied by the officers of the New South Wales Corps furnished them with singular advantages in the matter of mercantile speculations, and history supplies no record of any more unscrupulous or successful 'ring' than that formed by them. They had absolute control of the King's stores, which were supplies from England and contained all that was supposed to be necessary for the comfortable sustenance of the settlement, and from these stores they would obtain supplies of useful articles at cost price, to retail them out at an enormous profit; and in time